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STATUS AND SOCIAL WORTH OF THE MULATTO

BY PROFESSOR H. E. JORDAN, PH.D.

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

THE United States has something more than a "negro problem"; it has a mulatto problem. \ Our 10,000,000 colored fellow-citizens comprise somewhat less than 8,000,000 full-blooded negroes; approximately 2,000,000 contain varying percentages of "white" blood. } This "white man's burden" has several cardinal aspects, notably, social, economic and political. The fundamental aspect, however, is the biological. Does the presence of this vast company of "half-breeds" complicate or facilitate the "problem"? Certain it is that they must be reckoned with. Are they an aid or a hindrance to a permanent satisfactory adjustment of full relationship between the white race and the colored? To one man their presence is a source of black despair, to another of radiant hope. Which is the more rational attitude? It depends upon the scientific facts in the case. The first point concerns the biological status of this mulatto hybrid.

It may help the subsequent discussion to note at this point the fact that Jamaica does not have a "negro problem" as we know it in the United States. And on the face of things it would appear that it might well be present there in even more aggravated form. For in Jamaica there are only about 15,000 whites among a colored population of about 700,000, including about 50,000 mulattoes. It should be noted that in this "Queen of the Greater Antilles" the mulattoes, as a class, are more nearly at the level of the whites than at that of the negroes. The mulattoes contribute the artisans, the teachers, the business and professional men. They are the very backbone of modern Jamaica. To be sure, Jamaica has had 30 years more than the United States during which to "solve" her "negro problem." But perhaps the perfect adjustment between the races in Jamaica and the solution of any "problem" of this kind finds its explanation in a more rational and more consistent political treatment made possible by the absence of any constitutional prescription. We may well suspect that the inconsistency of according to the negro legal (constitutional) equality and withholding it practically (politically and socially) has had a morally harmful effect upon both black and white. To stultify oneself as between one's theory and practice is always subversive of high moral tone. We shall return to this point below.



THE BIOLOGICAL STATUS AND SOCIAL WORTH OF THE
MULATTO

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Suffice it to note here that the Honorable Mr. Olivier, governor of Jamaica, recognizes in the presence of the mulatto only a past blessing, a present advantage, and a future promise of great good.

In the beginning we shall need to raise the question once more as to whether the Negro and Caucasian are actually different man-species, as was held by the eminent zoologist, Louis Agassiz, and as is still held by many, as, for example, the noted French psychologist, Le Bon; or whether they simply represent different "races" or varieties of the same species *homo*, as is more commonly believed. Le Bon quotes with approval:

If the Negro and the Caucasian were snails, all zoologists would affirm unanimously that they constitute excellent species, which could never have descended from the same couple from which they had gradually come to differ.¹

However, simply external gross appearance is no infallible criterion by which to judge of species. And the more highly developed the organism the wider do the individuals differ within the species. Two human brothers may differ infinitely more than two true snail-species. Zoology can furnish many examples where a larval form, or individuals of opposite sex, or the same form modified by peculiar environmental conditions, have been mistaken for separate species. The real scientific test is that of impossibility of effecting a cross, or of infertility *inter se* of hybrids of a possible cross. A cross between the horse and the ass produces a mule. But mules are infertile if interbred. Hence horse and ass are separate species. A very valuable cross can also be effected between the cow and the buffalo. But the offspring are barren bred among themselves. Hence cow and buffalo are at least of different species. The mulatto is the product of a negro-white cross. He is as fecund with his own kind, or when he mates with white or negro, as either pure-breeding negroes or whites are. As a matter of fact, the mulatto is probably more prolific than the normal average of either white or negro. During the past twenty years he has increased at twice the rate of the Negro. The Negro is then simply a black variety of the human species. He is the white man's brother; and we may both be cousins of the apes.

The second question that presents itself is this: Is the mulatto necessarily degenerate? The idea has been and is very eminently and widely held that the crossing of races is intrinsically bad, biologically harmful; that it inevitably and inexorably works deterioration. Agassiz noted in Brazil a

decadence that results from cross-breeding which goes on in this country to a greater extent than elsewhere. This cross-breeding is fatal to the best qualities whether of the white man, the black, or the Indian, and produces an indescribable type whose physical and mental energy suffers.

¹ "The Psychology of Peoples," New York, 1912, p. 4.

Humboldt and Darwin held the same opinion. Hilaire Belloc in "The French Revolution" notes regarding Marat

Some say . . . that a mixture of racial types produced in him a perpetual physical disturbance: his face was certainly distorted and ill-balanced (p. 78).

Schultz claims to have noted an intrinsic deterioration in Gentile-Jew crosses. Le Bon expresses himself as follows:

To cross two peoples is to change simultaneously both their physical constitution and their mental constitution . . . the first effect of interbreeding between different races is to destroy the soul of the race, and by their soul we mean that congeries of common ideas and sentiments which make the strength of people, and without which there is no such thing as a nation or a fatherland . . . a people may sustain many losses, may be overtaken by many catastrophes, and yet recover from the ordeal, but it has lost everything and is past recovery, when it has lost its soul (pp. 53-55).

Le Bon explains this supposed necessary degeneration in half-breeds as due to the "influence of contrary heredities" which "saps their morality and character." We shall return to Le Bon's idea of a loss of "soul" as consequent of inter-racial crosses.

This same idea of necessary degeneracy in cross breeds is the main motive of much opposition to foreign immigration. We shall see that this is the very least element of danger; in fact, it may be a real panacea to other actual evils of immigration, otherwise (*i. e.*, without neutralization through cross-breeding) a serious menace. Note here the superb products of the English, German, Dutch, French and Spanish crosses of late and post-colonial days. The superiority of especially the English-German crosses, very generally noted, finds its reason in the initial superiority of the crossing stocks. And this is the secret of the entire matter. Offspring take after their parents, whether these be of the same or different race. The production of the Boer race, one of well-marked physical and mental characteristics, notwithstanding that it is of mongrel immigration, Dutch, French, and in some degree, British, is sufficient disproof of inherent hurt in inter-racial crosses. The more progressive of "white" nations have been produced by European interbreedings, for example, the English and the Bulgars. Furthermore, Davenport reminds us of probably even Ethiopian contributions to our European stock, "when we stop to consider the slaves, not only white and yellow, but also brown and black, that were brought to Rome, became free there and contributed elements to the population of Italy and to all Europe." Indeed, this may well have been a partial source of the pigment of European brunets.

Thoroughbred parents produce similar progeny. Inferior or degenerate parents have only defective children. In proof of which the following: Probably the most brilliant student I have ever known is the son of a high-class Chinese woman by an American missionary. There is probably as great a difference, from a general anatomical viewpoint,

exclusive of skin-pigment, between a Chinese and Caucasian as between a Negro and Caucasian. Similarly with respect to a number of Caucasian-Japanese crosses. There is no instinctive revulsion against such alliance; hence they are frequently made by superior individuals; and the offspring are of the same superior type, without evidence of deterioration. Indeed, it frequently happens that an unusually fortunate combination of the best racial characteristics of both races appears in an offspring of such cross, resulting in an extraordinarily endowed human being.

I admit the general inferiority of black-white offspring. Defective half-breeds are too prevalent and obtruding to permit denying the apparently predetermined result of such crosses. But I emphatically deny that the result is inherent in the simple fact of cross-breeding. There are not a few very striking exceptions among my own acquaintances. Absolutely the best mulatto family I have ever known traces its ancestry back on both the maternal and paternal side to high-grade white grandfathers and pure-type negro grandmothers. The reason for the frequently inferior product of such crosses is that the better elements of both races under ordinary conditions of easy mating with their own type feel an instinctive repugnance to intermarriage. Under these usual circumstances a white man who stoops to mating with a colored woman, or a colored woman who will accept a white man, are already of quite inferior type. One would not expect superior offspring from such parents, if it concerned horses or dogs. Why should we expect the biologically impossible in the case of man? If the parents are of good type, so will be the offspring. And even with the handicap of frequently degraded white ancestry, the mulatto of our country, as in Jamaica, forms the most intelligent and potentially useful element of our colored population.

The fact then is established, beyond all possibility of disproof, it seems to me, that a negro-white cross does not inherently mean degeneracy; and that the mulatto, measured by present-day standards of Caucasian civilization, from economic and civic standpoints, is an advance upon a pure negro. ~~For~~ further support of the potency of even a relatively remote white ancestry may be cited the almost unique instance of the Moses of the colored race, Booker T. Washington. As one mingles day by day with colored people of all grades and shades, one is impressed with the significance of even small admixtures of Caucasian blood. What elements of hope or menace lie hidden in these mulatto millions? How can they help to solve or confuse the "problem"?

Let us see clearly what we are dealing with. What are the large distinctive characteristics of the three types, white, mulatto and black, forming our civic and social complex? As to the negro—I quote from Le Bon:

Above the primitive races are found the inferior races, represented more especially by the negroes. They are capable of attaining to the rudiments of civilization, but to the rudiments only. They have never been able to get beyond quite barbarian forms of civilization, even where chance has made them the heirs, as in Saint Domingo, of superior civilization. . . . The inferior races further display but an infinitesimal power of attention and reflection; they possess the spirit of imitation in a high degree, the habit of drawing inaccurate general conditions from particular cases, a feeble capacity for observation and for deriving useful results from their observations, an extreme mobility of character, and a very notable lack of foresight. The instinct of the moment is their only guide (pp. 27-30).

The common European estimate of the negro, according to Olivier, is that

he is brutish, benighted and unprogressive, . . . "half-devil and half-child" ("White Capital and Coloured Labour," London, 1910, p. 2).

My own experience compels me to accept Le Bon's estimate as applicable to our American pure negro in perhaps slightly less extreme form, and with occasional exception; but "devil" is no more applicable to him than to white "brutes." Le Bon's description would seem to describe fairly accurately the racial characteristics of the negroes. The opinion of many men with whom I have discussed this matter confirms me in this judgment. The average of the Caucasian race is by implication characterized by the opposite traits of the typical negro.

The negro differs from the Caucasian in several well-marked anatomical characteristics. Any one who has associated with negroes detects even more striking mental or temperamental differences. These are quite obvious to teachers of mixed schools, fairly common in certain northern states. Where negro, mulatto and white are jointly concerned the teachers are unequivocal in their opinion that mental alertness and the development of the higher psychical activities corresponds in degree quite uniformly with the amount of "white" blood as judged by color of the skin. Le Bon also is quite emphatic on this point:

Each race possesses a mental constitution as unvarying as its anatomical constitution (p. 6).

and

The mental abyss that separates them (negro and white) is evident (p. 28).

This "mental constitution" is the source of a race's "sentiments, thoughts, institutions, beliefs and arts," its "soul."

Where does the mulatto stand with respect to negroes and whites? In general, as a race, approximately midway. But it includes types combining the best as well as the worst of both races. The former almost certainly predominate at the present time.

In Jamaica, according to Governor Olivier,

In practise it is the fact that the pure negro does not show the business capacity and ambition of the man of mixed race, and there are few, if any,

persons of pure African extraction in positions of high consideration, authority or responsibility (p. 34).

Respecting the status and worth of the mulatto in Jamaica, Governor Olivier expresses the opinion that he is

an acquisition to the community, and, under favorable conditions, an advance on the pure-bred African . . . an indispensable part of any West Indian community, and that a colony of black, colored and whites has far more organic efficiency and far more promise in it than a colony of black and white alone. . . . The graded mixed class in Jamaica helps to make an organic whole of the community and save it from the distinct cleavage (p. 38).

The mulatto has appeared through the white man's acts. He will greatly increase in the coming generations, by breeding with both his kind and with pure negroes. A high fertility is increased relative to the negro by a lessening death-rate. It is fortunate that he represents an advance on the negro, and a real national advantage in our efforts to adjust the negro "problem."

Three further questions must be considered before a summary can be given of the mulatto's social and civic value. (1) Are there fairly well-fixed upper limits of mental capacity for negroes and mulattoes? (2) What are the known and established principles of inheritance of racial traits of negroes and whites; in other words, will it be possible by some control of hybrid and inter-racial crosses to produce a colored stock in which a majority may combine the desirable traits of both white and negro? (3) Will it be possible under the constitution and its present amendments to deal with the problem in accordance with the dictates of science and common sense?

With respect to the first point then: We have here only opinion; but it is absolutely unanimous: the negro can not undergo mental development beyond a certain definite maximum.² The curious thing

² Since this was written I have seen practically the contrary conclusion stated by Professor Herbert Adolphus Miller, of Olivet College, Michigan, in a work which he has kindly permitted me to read in manuscript and from which he allows me to quote. This is a splendid investigation, unique from the standpoint of its materials, and marked especially by originality and caution. In essence it is exactly the sort of research I am pleading for in my paper. "Psychophysical tests" were "given to 2,488 Negroes, 520 Indians and 1,493 Whites, including 596 Mountain Whites in the Tennessee and Kentucky Mountains." Six tests were employed for (1) Memory (*a*) discontinuous; (*b*) logical; (2) Rational Instinct; (3) Imagination; (4) Color Choice; and (5) Reaction Time. He summarizes his conclusions as follows: (1) There is no sharp line of demarcation between the races within the range of the given tests; (2) the differences are of degree, not of kind; (3) this degree is not a race-limitation, for many whites are inferior to many negroes, even in logical memory; (4) from the standpoint of original endowment there is nothing in kind to differentiate the negro from the Caucasian; (5) no faculty is lacking in the negro, and there are some that are especially strong; (6) *limits of capacity do not follow race lines* (italics my own.) The question arises as to how far these

is that no attempt is made to establish this opinion on a scientific basis, and to definitely determine that limit of mental development beyond which the law of diminishing returns dictates cessation of effort; and furthermore, that in flat contradiction to this common opinion education is planned in apparent utter disregard of it.

We are now in possession of a fairly precise and very simple method of determining innate mental capacity in the Binet-Simon series of mental tests. These tests ought at once to be applied to several thousand each of negro and colored school children. The results should yield a fairly accurate idea as to the relative capacity for education and the limits for each. This is of very practical importance. If it can be shown that the negro brain has definite, relatively low limits of flexibility and development, money should not be spent in attempting the impossible. This is the more serious in view of the common inadequacy of educational facilities. The limit of economical educative return being determined, the negro should be given the best possible opportunities for reaching the uppermost range. This would be to the best interest of white and negro alike. If the returns indicated, as is commonly assumed, that mulattoes are endowed with a higher educable limit, national interests again demand that they be given means of attaining the maximum capacity.

The point is that our activities along educational lines, seeing that the financial resources of the states most intimately concerned are relatively meager, should follow clearly indicated paths as determined by scientific facts. Even with our present knowledge it would seem that wisdom and foresight should take more practical heed of Booker Washington's keen suggestion and example, namely, that the education of the negro be for the present chiefly along industrial, and secondly moral lines. The Binet tests would also early detect the feeble-minded and mentally defective, an especially serious menace in an already naturally handicapped race. Very rigid safeguards should be provided against the reproductive liberty of these unfortunates, so that the race suffer no internal contamination. A first step in the scientific approach of this fundamental aspect of the "problem" would certainly seem to be the very extensive study of colored mentality by the Binet measuring scale. We shall work largely in the dark until we have this information.

With respect to the second point: Until recently it was believed that mulattoes generally bred true and became progressively lighter conclusions follow from neglect or inability, to differentiate the *mulatto* from the *negro*. Moreover, the Binet tests seem to me superior for the purpose in hand to those employed by Professor Miller, and for this reason, and also because scientific work touching so important and serious a matter needs confirmation and reconfirmation, should be used in further more extensive similar investigations.

with succeeding generations. We now know that skin color in inheritance follows in general Mendelian laws of inheritance, frequently giving rise to white and black "sports" in every large family of mulatto children. In accordance with Mendelian principles, the result of a white-negro cross is always brown-skinned, the dark skin color *dominating*. "White" and "black" skin colors are a pair of *unit characters*. White color means the absence of the *determiner* for deep pigmentation in the germ-plasm; dark skin is due to the presence of such *determiner*. When first generation hybrids intermarry, in an appropriately large family there will appear invariably one or several children lighter than either parent, and one or several darker; that is, the "lighter" and the "darker" have reverted to the grandparental character for skin color. This reveals the fact of a *segregation* of the determiners of skin color in the germ-cells, producing a *purity of gametes*.

We are now in possession of facts, thanks mainly to the labors of Professor Karl Pearson and his collaborators at the Galton Eugenics Laboratory, and to Professor Davenport and his staff of assistants at the Eugenics Record Office, showing that the inheritance of several scores of human physical and mental traits are in close conformity with Mendelian formulæ. There is no countervailing fact, and there is much precise and yet more suggestive data, to the assumption that many of the really desirable negro traits (*e. g.*, physical strength, resistance or relative immunity to certain infections, capacity for routine, cheerful temperament, vivid imagination, rhythmic and melodic endowment, etc.) are of the nature of *unit characters* and as such may be transmitted according to fixed laws by simple control of matings.

If a demi-god could thus experiment with human crosses, as biologists now do with animal breeds, a pure race could undoubtedly be established combining the best elements of the negro and the white. I am well aware that little could probably be actually accomplished under present social conditions, even if it were not morally inimical, to make the experiment by legal control of negro and mulatto crosses. But some little could be accomplished by education and the arousing of the sentiment of colored racial pride. The point seems clear that in the presence of 2,000,000 mulattoes, steadily increasing in number, of relatively superior worth to the pure negro, we have a key to the solution of our problem. The mulatto is the leaven with which to lift the negro race. He serves as our best lever for negro elevation. The mulatto does not feel the instinctive mental nausea to negro mating. He might even be made to feel a sacred mission in this respect. The negro aspires to be mulatto, the mulatto to be white. These aspirations are worthy, and should be encouraged. Possibility of marriage

with mulatto would be a very real incentive to serious efforts for development on the part of the negro. The logical conclusion may follow in the course of the ages. At any rate from present indications our hope lies in the mulatto. A wise statesmanship and rational patriotism will make every effort to conserve him, and imbue him with his mission in the interests of the brotherhood of a better man. The problem seems possible of solution only as the mulatto will undertake it, with the earnest help of the white.

But Le Bon tells us the cross-breed has no "soul." Surely a soulless race would be a world calamity! But these words are poetical, not scientific. A mulatto has no more lost his soul in being hybrid or a descendant thereof than I should if I were to take up my abode in Fiji. This would surely hurt. But I should be no less a man for all my mental pain. The experience might conceivably work to the expansion of my soul. The mulatto is as loyal to his country, his friends and his conscience, according to his lights, as a "white" man. He is just as sensitive. He feels as deeply, experiences the same thrills of happiness as other rational human beings. He has a soul in as true a sense as the word is used by Le Bon as any man. He has more truly a soul in this sense than the "thoroughbred" professor who has lost his childhood's religious faith. Olivier says on this point:

Whereas the pure race in its prime knows one man only, itself, and one God, its own will, the hybrid is incapable of this exclusive racial pride, and inevitably becomes aware that there is something, the something that we call human, which is greater than the one race or the other, and something in the nature of spiritual power, that is stronger than national God or will. What were, to each separate race, final forms of truth, become, when competing in the focus of our human consciousness, mutually destructive, and each recognizably insufficient. Yet the *hybrid finds himself still very much alive, and not at all extinguished with the collapse of his racial theories* (p. 25, italics my own).

The truth is that the hybrid finds himself *alive* and *human*, with all that this signifies in terms of capacity for soul development. The pure-bred has no better initial equipment. In the matter of human fundamentals they come to differ only as a different nurture plays upon a very similar human nature. There surely are no real data for the support of Le Bon's notion that contrary hereditaries sap the vitality of hybrids and leave them barren of soul.

The last point is equally difficult, but, like the preceding two, not forbidding. It may be briefly more or less summarily disposed of. The negro can not afford to surrender aught granted him under the constitution. It would be harmful to both colored and whites at this stage of progress to have such alteration achieved as would give the governing powers the free hand exercised by the English in their treatment of the negro of Jamaica. A comparison of conditions as between

the United States and Jamaica with reference to its negro population, however, shows us floundering far in the distance. How can English colonial conditions be paralleled without violence to our constitution? By a simple method, apparent to all, the adoption of which would work incalculable benefit to our nation. The canker of our present political condition as it affects the negro is the moral sore of a stultified conscience. Very naturally when the negro realizes that the constitution makes him politically the equal of any white man, while he knows he is an inferior individual, if indeed only in the sense that a child is inferior to an adult, he detects a first inconsistency. This he accepts; and views equal suffrage as a gift. But when he further realizes that equality of suffrage is a theory, which is disregarded in practise, he sees an inconsistency which he resents, and which moves him to loss of respect. This is the root of distrust and dissimulation and antagonism, which is at the source of the troubles which constitute our "negro problem." Skin color among mulattoes is no scientific index of potential civic worth.

In brief, a state's right of suffrage should be based upon reasonable and uniform qualifications applied actually, as verbally, to all alike of whatever color (and finally sex). No ballot is free from the potentiality of great ill, unless it be cast by an honest, thrifty and intelligent hand. Appropriate educational and property qualifications uniform for all members of a state, and probably as between states, is a reasonable, just and right requirement. This is a first step, for which we already have the light of reason. Further steps must be taken more or less cautiously coincidently with accumulating scientific data. The "problem" is bright with hope; but it must be approached with charity and consistency and with scientific skill and courage.

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